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journal or publication title	Kwansei Gakuin University Social Sciences Review
volume	24
page range	49-67
year	2020-02-18
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10236/00028433

Differences in Penetration of Ethical Consumption between the US and Japan: From the perspective of Home Economics

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With the adoption of the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations General Assembly in September, 2015, ethical consumption has attracted considerable attention in Japan. Ishinabe (2012, p.19), who wrote many articles on ethical consumption for the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, describes the history of the much-discussed consumption as follows. According to Kaori Nakano, a fashion historian and a specially appointed professor in Meiji University, around 2005, a keyword called “ethical” has begun to draw attention. The trend has started with the fashion industry in Europe, where a considerable opposition to the tremendous popularity of “fast fashion” emerged, that is, cheap clothes with trendy designs were manufactured to be thrown away in the short term. Creators began to compete in design and sophistication using only the materials and production methods that focus on protecting of the natural environment and animals, ensuring the sustainability of society, and securing the work environment for the workers in the sewing factories.

“The trend has become so dominant in recent years that we could now claim that fashion wears ethics,” Nakano pointed out in her book *Mode, Eros and Capital* (Shueisha Shinsho). Since then, ethical fashion shows have been held every year in Europe and the US, followed by a similar event organized in Japan in 2010 by the students of the fashion school, however, on a small scale.

Afterwards, the word ethical has been used in other fields, namely, ethical cosmetics, ethical food, and ethical lifestyle.

This trend includes many practices such as recycling, fair trade, organic farming and local production for local consumption, naturalistic cosmetics,

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craftsmanship based on the traditional culture passed down through generations, products whose profits are donated to charity, trips with the purpose of social action, old clothes and old folk houses, and renewable energy. These practices have in common the concept that we should not destroy or hurt nature, the society, or other people as much as possible. It may be said that the word ethical gave a comprehensive outline of these separate phenomena.

The concept of “ethical consumption” has been popularized in the US after the Lehman shock of 2008. For example, a headline appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in the autumn of 2009 featuring the movement, heralding “the rise of ethical consumers”. The magazine regarded ethical consumption as the third way for social engagement, after voting and volunteering, and showed that the number of people, who think that it is their responsibility to choose a company and/or brand that pays attention to social problems in their everyday shopping, has been increasing.

As shown above, in general, US consumers have an awareness of ethical consumption or their responsibility as citizens in their consumption (Miwa, 2015). In Japan, the Consumer Affairs Agency developed some activities to raise the public awareness of ethical consumption for two years from 2015, with many conferences and events about ethical consumption being held. However, the concept of ethical consumption has not taken root in Japan or manifested itself as a social action. Therefore, we have to investigate the causes of this failure. The authors propose that this issue is related to consumer education, or the approaches to home economics in Japan. In the US, the principle of individualism has been the base of home economics as an academic discipline, with consumer education being provided from the viewpoint of individual responsibility. Conversely, although, in Japan, home economics was introduced in the Meiji period by imitating the US approach, the practitioners had no clear idea of the individual social responsibility. Thus, we could argue that the Japanese home economics have lost its influence on consumption behavior, since only a superficial part of American home economics was imported without considering the Japanese traditional set of values.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 1 reviews the history of home economics as an academic discipline in Japan. Section 2 clarifies how ethical consumption and SDGs became important during the evolution of American home economics. Section 3 investigates the issues of ethical consumption and SDGs related to the Japanese people and culture from various perspectives. Section 4 identifies the problems of contemporary consumer education in Japanese home economics. Finally, in section 5, we highlight the necessity for a global approach as well as the essential parts of the Japanese culture.

I. Home Economics in Japan

Home economics has been founded and developed as a higher education field for women in Japan. The name of home economics appeared in public for the first time in 1945, as one of the subjects suitable for women, when the door for higher education was open to girls according to the guidelines of the reform of women's education (agreed upon at cabinet meetings). The purpose was to educate working women to be instructors, good wives, and wise mothers. Thus, it was natural that they focused on the practical skills of housework (Kimoto, 2005, pp.207-8).

When it emerged as an academic discipline appropriate for tertiary education, they based the curriculum on American home economics. The Ministry of Education dispatched a substantial number of students to Western countries from the early Meiji era to 1940 to help import the advanced sciences from abroad. In particular, policymakers decided that home economics was a suitable subject for women to study. According to the plan, some of the graduates of the women's higher schools of education were sent to European countries and the US, so that they could contribute to the introduction of home economics. They were encouraged to learn the instruction programs of practical skills of home economics (Kimoto, 2005, p.208).

There were other students studying abroad at their own expense who had their own intentions such as Jinzo Naruse, who established Japan Women's University later. During his studying abroad from 1890 through 1894, Naruse was impressed by the modern family life in the US, where the wife played an important role as the spiritual pillar of the family, regarding it as a base of the concept of home economics. Utako Shimoda was also moved by how women behaved lively as independent persons in European countries and the US, which she visited for the purpose of acquiring necessary information to teach the Japanese princesses how to integrate into the modern international society. Shimoda founded Jissen Women's University later in 1898. When she published *Home Economics* in 1890s as a textbook for her students, she stressed the importance of the family economy, by which she meant "to make shift with the salary of the husband." Shimoda regarded home economics as a "practical science" that was necessary for women to learn to manage their family lives better. For her, a good family life was indispensable for the prosperity of the country. However, she neglected exploring the background and the underlying values of home economics in the US.

Since the Meiji period, home economics has been developed with a focus on practical instruction. The guidelines of the reform of women's education were approved by the cabinet in 1945 as mentioned above. In addition, people who were involved in founding Japanese home economics were required to include

systematicity and academic coherence to get positions in the universities' departments. To overcome this problem, they avoided building a theoretical framework for the discipline such as consumer education. Alternatively, they chose to claim that home economics should foster women's advance into society and independence, insisting on providing opportunities for higher education necessary for women to work in society. According to the draft prepared for the establishment of the department of home economics in 1947, the purpose of the department was defined as educating and studying the academic arts related to family life and community to contribute to the improvement of quality of life. Since they had to establish the system of the department hurriedly, the theoretical part of the academic discipline had not been fully discussed. Therefore, they faced many difficulties regarding categorizing the subjects. As the curriculum plan was left to the discretion of the respective university, the practical training on traditional housework could be kept intact. Furthermore, they often placed such subjects as food, clothing, child education, and dwelling as principal pillars of the department (Kimoto, 2005, p.212). Sumita (1993, p.318) argued that Japanese scholars of home economics, "who were born influenced by the US to start an academic discipline without a coherent theory," just accepted the concept superficially, but did not digest the idea as originally developed in the US.

II. Home Economics in the US

What was the American home economics that the founders of Japanese home economics tried to imitate? In fact, they are strikingly different in their underlying values and awareness of issues.

The history of home economics in the US could be divided into two phases (Imai, 1990, 1992). The first phase, or moral home economics, originated with Harriet Beecher. (The records show that it began with a physicist. However, in this paper, we choose Beecher because of her influence on the contemporary literature.)

The Protestant values or domestic myths seen in her idea of home economics were the same values widely spread throughout the American society in the 19th century. In other words, the concept of home economics corresponded to the underlying values of society. It is also worth noting that the female writers of mothers' books, which were popular among people in those days, including Beecher, often highlighted good mothers who take responsibility as individuals to protect their homes from the evils of society.

The second phase is called the home economics of consumption, signaled by the Lake Placid Conferences, which were held for ten years starting in 1899. Beecher's domestic economy, or domestic science, was developed into home

economics affected by the consumerism movement from the conferences. (The name of home economics was chosen at the first conference at Lake Placid.)

Imai (1995) explained consumerism from the perspectives of marketing (consumers-oriented approach), the government efforts, and the consumer behavior (who try to improve his/her quality of life). He considered those three functions positively, although consumerism itself emerged from the background of distortion and inequality, or deep uneasiness of the life, of the American affluent society (Imai, 1995, p.9). In the first place, consumerism was meant to protect consumers from the injustice of the companies, which threatened health and security of powerless people. According to Imai (1990, 1995), consumerism can be divided into four phases as follows.

The early 1900s witnessed the first phase of consumerism, or the rise of consumerism, in which the American Home Economics Society was established, with the Sherman Act (1890) and Clayton Act (1914) helping, indirectly, protect consumers. At the first lake Placid Conference in 1899 that symbolized the first phase of consumerism, participants discussed the dramatic effects of the Industrial Revolution on the lives of consumers and how to deal with them, insisting on consumer protection and welfare. It is important to note that Richards, one of the central figures of the conference had a critical mind toward the ignorance of consumers, appealing for the need for the education of consumers.

The second phase, which was the formative period of consumerism, began in the 1920s through the 1930s. Practitioners assumed that the mission of home economics was to protect the lives of consumers in the face of the system of mass production, mass distribution, and mass consumption that took root, causing serious problems to life, health, and security. Therefore, the Consumer Institute was established to carry out product comparative tests and to promote self-defensive consumption behaviors.

The 1960s marked the third phase of consumerism, when President Kennedy declared the responsibility of the government for the consumer protection through the “four rights of consumers” in 1962, since consumers were exposed to dangers by industrial pollution, damage of the living environment, harmful and/or dangerous products, and dazzling advertisements. In 1969, consumer education was listed as one of the main themes at the general assembly of the home economics society.

In the 1970s through the 1980s, which mark the fourth phase of consumerism, the movement changed from its radical approach to a somewhat gradual one, as home economists reached a consensus that they should play a different role as a bridge between consumers, businesses, and the government to rebuild the relationships of trust which they lacked for a long time. Therefore, home economics highlighted consumption and economy as the core of the discipline. According to

the Dewey decimal classification (library classification), home economics is not categorized as a subject of domestic economy, but as a subject of consumption economics.

The authors of this paper agree with the viewpoint that the fifth phase started with the emergence of green consumption (Sato, 1993). In response to the public demand, the Body Shop International dealing in the naturalistic cosmetics was established in the UK in 1976. (House of Rose, which is also a naturalistic cosmetics company, was founded in Japan in 1978.) The Body Shop implemented the waste hierarchy (i.e., reduce, reuse, and recycle [3 Rs]) and fair trade, and made efforts in green-related political activities. Additionally, American Express launched the campaign for restoring the Statue of Liberty, introducing the cause-related marketing (CRM). In the campaign, they claimed that they would donate one dollar to the foundation of the restoration of the Statue of Liberty for every new customer of the card, while they would donate one cent to the same foundation when the consumer uses the card one time from October to December in 1983, with the total amount of contributions being 1.7 million dollars (Sato, 1993, p.151).

Moreover, there was an outstanding movement in the American Marketing Association. In 1969, Kotler and Levy published a shocking article titled “Broadening the Concept of Marketing,” in which they insisted that the concept of marketing should be applied to the activities of every organization, including the non-profit organizations (NPO) and the profit-making enterprises. They also insisted that every organization developed marketing activities unconsciously. In addition, Kotler and Zaltman published an article called “Social Marketing” in 1971, where they regarded social marketing as a marketing communication activity based on a set of values aiming to change the behaviors of people for the public good. Further, Lazer and Kelly published a collection of papers called *Social Marketing* in 1973, where they defined social marketing as a concept related to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

It is important to note that there are two meanings of the word “social.” One is social at the micro level, while the other implies the whole society, where the adjective “societal” is used in this latter sense. For example, El-Ansary (1974) insisted that the social marketing defined by Lazer and Kelly (1973) should be called societal marketing because it involves CSR. The authors agree with the opinion of El-Ansary.

As seen above, in the fifth phase of consumerism, each theme of ethical consumption or ethical marketing, including green consumption, CRM, and fair trade has appeared. However, they are just separate parts of a whole. It is in the sixth phase of consumerism that the parts are unified as ethical consumption and corresponding ethical marketing.

Ethical consumption appeared as the sixth phase of consumerism because of the increasing awareness of solving social problems among consumers through their own consumption activities. For example, many guidebooks were published explaining clearly how the everyday consumption behaviors affect the global environment. In 2011, Porter and Kramer argued in an article called “Creating Shared Value (CSV)” that companies were going to solve social issues through their core business model beyond CSR.

Therefore, the characteristics of the sixth phase of consumerism include the recognition of the need for dealing with the environmental problems, such as air pollution, acid rain, desertification, and the abnormal weather caused by global warming, on a global scale. Therefore, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were formulated as a common framework by integrating the millennium declaration adopted at the millennium summit of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York in September, 2000, and the international development goals adopted at the main international conferences and summits held in the 1990s. It shows an agreement by the 193 member states of the United Nations and 23 international organizations to achieve these goals by 2015. These goals have been succeeded by the SDGs as the new goals in the United Nations development plan for 2030.

It is natural that American home economics with a critical mind focused on consumer education to enhance the consumer value of individualistic responsibility for his/her own consumption, which influences the society, resulting in the penetration and development of ethical consumption in the American society. Conversely, in Japan, where home economists adopted the image of an ideal woman in the new age who could behave lively without hesitation in public space, home economics was considered an aspect of westernization after the Meiji era, while the discussion about its underlying set of values became secondary. Hence, although they adopted the scientific approach to the domestic skills from the US, the practical training on house skills such as clothing and cooking has been the main focus in the academic field.

III. The Problems of Contemporary Consumer Education in Japanese Home Economics

Now, it is time to return to the opening question: why has ethical consumption not gained a foothold among people in Japan? Before providing an answer, it is necessary to review the current situation of ethical consumption in Japan.

On the website of the Consumer Affairs Agency, ethical consumption is defined as “consuming action with attention to the solutions to social problems and supporting the companies who make efforts in working on such problems.” The

Consumer Affairs Agency plays a central role in popularizing the idea of ethical consumption by holding various events and/or meetings. In addition, the Japan Ethical Initiation proposed that the 2020 Olympics should be “ethical Olympics.” However, according to the survey on consumer awareness of ethical consumption conducted by the Consumer Affairs Agency in 2016, the rate of recognition of the word “ethical consumption” fell short of 10% (Deno and Sato, 2019).

In Japan, the management of businesses does not feel confident that people do shopping with an awareness of ethical consumption. For example, Jun Miyazaki, a senior executive managing officer at Lawson, Inc. said, “I do not think that the idea and behavior of ethical consumption or sustainability have been established among people, while the businesses have shared the idea that ethical consumption and sustainability are necessary for them to survive,” in an interview conducted by the authors on July 31, 2019.

As an example of the CSV initiatives of Japanese companies, “The Chocolate” series was released by Meiji Holdings Co., Ltd. as a high-quality chocolate, whose rich taste is enjoyed by the people, in specialty stores in 2014. Despite the higher price compared to the general chocolate bar, it sold 30 million pieces in less than one year, with the series ranking second on the hot seller best 30 provided by *Nikkei Trendy* in 2017. Additionally, the company released a different chocolate product using the cacao produced by agroforestry, which helped revitalization of the devastated forests in the Amazon area, naming the product explicitly “Agroforestry,” demonstrating its own initiative clearly on the product. Some people suggested that they should enjoy the chocolate and contribute to the environment in Social Networking Service (SNS), although it did not lead to big sales. The Agroforestry product has been manufactured and distributed, since the company considered it “indispensable as a CSV initiative” irrespective of the sales.

Few people know that the same cacao produced by agroforestry has been used as the main ingredient in “The Chocolate” series because the company did not promote agroforestry and its initiatives by the product. Although the company named the production area, it did not refer to the method of cultivating the cacao. According to the company, the cacao produced by agroforestry has a superior quality apart from the initiative for saving the environment. The quality of the chocolate itself with a simple design has led to big sales without making a claim of contribution to society.

However, it is not that there has been no tendency for ethical consumption in Japan, as the Japanese people inherited the idea of “*mottainai*” long before the introduction of the concept of ethical consumption to Japan, where the cultural customs of the savers of Kyoto may be included under the category of “*mottainai*.” Additionally, the sensitivity, which has been taught as one of the disciplines at

home from ancient times, is similar to the 3 R practice. People show their gratitude to animals and producers by eating up and using up food and products.

With respect to charity, common people performed it in a form of mutual cooperation as seen in the works of Saikaku Ihara in the Edo era. Hiroaki Ichikawa, a curator of the Edo Tokyo Museum (2014) explained the cultural background and human relations of the general public in the Edo era as follows.

”The residents of the tenement house, *nagaya*, have built strong relationships among them. They helped each other in their everyday life. Since their human relationships was as close as that of a family, a relative, or a close friend, they did not hesitate to borrow and loan anything. As the idea was common that it is natural for weak people to receive support, the residents who were in economic trouble received offers of some goods and financial support from the more well-off residents. They shared a recognition that what you have belongs to the common property of the tenement house . . . People in the Edo period took it for granted that you must not annoy others and that you have to share what you have with them.”

However, when the concept of ethical consumption was introduced to Japan in the mid-2010s, most of the Japanese tradition of consumption culture was not chosen as a conceptual base. In 2016, the Consumer Affairs Agency asked for Japanese wording that can easily convey the purpose of ethical consumption. They illustrated how and why they decided to ask for the wording in the final report given by the survey committee of ethical consumption in 2017 as follows: “we attempted to facilitate the documentation of the idea of ethical consumption, which involves various viewpoints, as the word “ethical” might give an image difficult to understand. Therefore, we asked for the Japanese wording, which can easily convey the purpose of ethical consumption from mid-July through the end of August in 2016 to clarify what type of image consumers have about ethical consumption. Many people suggested “consumption of consideration” or “connecting consumption,” with various words such as “future,” “kind,” “society,” “connecting,” and “heart” offered as keywords for ethical consumption. Thus, it is possible to suggest that consumers have positive images of ethical consumption.” However, the Consumer Affairs Agency admits that it was difficult to express various meanings with one word; hence, it was necessary to apply some words depending on the audience generation and the context of the message. Although it may seem that they attempted to adopt Japanese sensitivity and cultural set of values, what they preferred was just superficial plainness.

The brochure made by the Consumer Affairs Agency in 2018 addressed the public in such a casual manner as follows: “The word of ethical consumption sounds stiff, doesn’t it?” However, the agency showed no intention to explain the stiff word with traditional ideas, which were familiar to the Japanese people.

As seen above, there has been already the consumption culture of “*mottainai*” and the charity concept of mutual aid in the Edo era. Thus, a question arises concerning why the Japanese people could not accept easily the idea of ethical consumption and charity when it was introduced from Europe and the US. Ethical consumption and charity are originally based on the idea of making the society better by our own consumption behaviors. In Japan, the relationship between consumers and the “society” differs from that in Europe and the US, with the key to its understanding being hidden in the aforementioned explanation of human relationships in the Edo period provided by Ichikawa (2014). It corresponds to the core claim that affinity is crucial for CRM to penetrate in Japan (Hiraiwa, Hongo, Aishima, and Sato, 2019). Hence, it is necessary to return to the Japanese understandings of the concept of “society,” or “*shakai*” in Japanese, to explore this issue.

The word *shakai* came to be used as a translation of society after the Meiji era. Yanabu (1982, p.3) explained how the word was coined as follows: “the word of society was too difficult for the intellectuals in those days to translate into Japanese because they had no words equivalent to society. In other words, they had no circumstances that the word society described. Afterwards, the word of *shakai* was coined and widely established among the Japanese people; however, it does not mean that they came to have circumstances similar to the societies [of European countries and the US].”

According to Yanabu, the word society was translated into “fellow, group, companion, and company,” or “meeting, company, associate, acquaintance, and colleague” in some English-Japanese dictionaries popular in the first half of the early Meiji era. Yukichi Fukuzawa translated it as “human association,” rather than “associates,” “fellowship,” “country,” and “world”. It is clear that he paid attention to the close and direct relationship of the word to society. Yanabu (1982, p.12) pointed out that Fukuzawa avoided thinking about the concept of society as a core foundation or analyzing the modern civil society. His way of translating was not deductive analysis; far from it, Fukuzawa sought some new expressions to describe a superficial phenomenon by the closest Japanese word without digesting those European and American concepts fundamentally, including society. In addition, Masanao Nakamura adopted several Japanese words for society, including “government” (Yanabu, 1982, p.13). When regarding the relationship between society, or *shakai*, and the individual or *kojin* (which was another newly coined word in the Meiji era), it had an important meaning; however, it is not to be discussed in this paper.

Abe (1995, pp.13-14) discussed “society” in Japan as follows: “in Europe, the society is based on an individual, who has an inalienable dignity. The Europeans

think that society consists of individuals; thus, the situation of the society depends on its members. The individual is understood to be the fundamental unit, which makes up the society. However, here in Japan, the idea of individual dignity has not been fully accepted yet. Besides, the Japanese people do not understand that the world or “*seken*” is an entity made by the individuals’ intentions or that the situation of *seken* depends on the individuals’ intentions. For the Japanese people, *seken* is considered as given . . . the Japanese people live in a frame called the world, or *seken*. Everybody lives with an awareness of *seken*.”

Abe (1995, p.17) continues as follows: “now, the word *seken* refers to a range of a relatively narrow association; however, the people tend to think that the word has a wider meaning equivalent to the society, as the word implied much more profound meanings under the influence of Buddhism.” However, actually, the range of the normal Japanese association is not so wide, and the world or *seken*, which many Japanese belong to, is relatively small. For many Japanese, the concept of the human sounds unfamiliar. Therefore, it is natural for the Japanese people to take the idea of global brotherhood as unrealistic, since they consider those who belong to the same world or *seken* as associates in the dimension of everyday life.”

Abe (1995, pp.225-226) summarizes conclusively as follows: “Few people lived as individuals in Japan. Everybody made up some type of *seken* and lived in it . . . It means that, in Japan, the individuals had no other means to express themselves except for their close relation with *seken*. In this regard, for a long time in Japan, the attempts to describe society have been expressed by the word “*seken*,” since all the emotional aspects of human relations were connected to it.”

In other words, when society confronts an individual in Europe and the US, the individual has his/her own opinion with a sense of responsibility, protects him/herself, and uses his/her rights. Consumer education was needed so that the people would not be deceived by the companies. The consumers had to get wiser by studying home economics. In addition, society in Europe and the US included the societal aspect.

Conversely, the Japanese control themselves in relation to the world or *seken*. Shinobu Kitayama created the concept of interdependent construal of self to express the characteristics of self-awareness of the Japanese people, while the English and the American people are considered as independent construal of self, (Marcus & Kitayama, 1991, Kitayama, 1997). In this respect, Chen and Moosmayer (2018) conducted an interesting research.

They analyzed how the difference in the national characteristics between interdependent self-construal and independent self-construal and the “guilt for developing countries” related to the strength of the support for fair trade. They found that when a sense of guilt became stronger among people with independent

self-construal, the support for fair trade became stronger too. However, in the case of the Chinese people with interdependent self-construal, a stronger guilt did not lead to a stronger support for fair trade. Hence, they concluded that people with interdependent self-construal are ready to support others close to themselves, whereas they show a little interest in helping others in remote countries, to which they have no connection. Why?

Kaji (1990, pp.14-15, 143-144) explains that “the Chinese thought is made by *kanji* and the sentence using *kanji*. Essentially, the *kanji* is an ideograph that means the copying of an object. First, there is a thing, and then a *kanji* is born as its pictorial expression. It follows that an object (physical existence) comes first, namely, objects are given priority. It is the reason why the Chinese people are more interested in material existence than the metaphysical world. In this way, the Chinese people have come to have realistic ideas based on facts and material things. What is reality? For them, reality is the world of the concrete sense of things. Therefore, they take the most interest in the world of the sense. The basic reason why the Chinese people are realistic has been shown here. Therefore, the Chinese people give top priority to the practical world of the five senses.”

It is possible to explain sufficiently the reasons why ethical consumption has failed to take root in the Japanese mindset with these four aforementioned points, that is, (1) Abe’s argument about the relationship between the Japanese people and *seken*; (2) the discussion by Chen and Moosmayer (2018) about the little interest in fair trade shown by the people with interdependent self-construal; (3) Kaji’s theory of *kanji* and realistic thinking; and (4) Fukuzazwa’s translation of “society” into Japanese. Mentally, the Japanese people have a difficulty accepting the abstract idea of ethical consumption as societal marketing.

IV. Contemporary Consumer Education in Japanese Home Economics

In 1970, the definition of home economics was established for the first time by the committee of principles of home economics as follows: “home economics is a practical science with empirical approach that contribute to the increase in the happiness of the people by improving family life as well as their development as a human beings. Centering on the family life, the topics of social phenomena related to the family life, and the interaction between people and environment, are to be dealt with from both human and material sides.” It is said that the committee members were strongly influenced by the American Home Economics Association while formulating this definition. It was the starting point for the Japanese home economics to develop as an academic discipline; however, they failed to reach an agreement on the purpose or the research method. In the 1980s, the topic “what is

home economics?” was often discussed, with the department of home economics undergoing a great change. As the discipline was transformed to cover the field of life science from a practical perspective with a focus on the how-to, the department was drastically reorganized.

During the same period, new viewpoints of consumer education and environment education were introduced into home economics by Mitsuaki Imai. Instructors of home economics tended to learn from the US consumer education. Tamura and Karasuda (1977) attempted to compare between the Japanese consumer education and its American counterpart. According to the comparative research, consumer education provided at the elementary schools in Japan focused on the understanding of the marks and quality of the product, while the topics of promoting healthy consumption and family life, understanding the system of consumption economy, and knowing the rights of consumers were considered secondary. They pointed out that students were supposed to learn about food, clothing and shelter, childcare, and home appliances at the junior high school. They also studied the curriculum of consumer education offered in four states in the US, where the students were first encouraged to recognize their own individuality and to explain why they are different from other people, and later, to learn how to make value judgment and decisions on their own.

Before the lagging behind situation of Japanese consumer education was remarkably improved, the Act on Promotion of Consumer Education came into effect in 2012, when the Japan Society of Home Economics was forced to change its course again. The act aimed at the building of a consumer citizen society, which is defined as a society where consumers actively commit themselves to the creation of a just and sustainable society with mutual respect for the individuality of each consumer and the diversity of consumer lifestyles, and with an awareness of how their own consumption behaviors could influence social and economic trends both at home and abroad, and the global environment at present and for future generations. These sentences of the act can be read as a declaration to plan the penetration of ethical consumption.

Ahead of the establishment of the Act on Promotion of Consumer Education, a new course of consumer education was introduced into the department of modern home economics in Tokyo Kasei Gakuin University in 2009, which reflected the trends in contemporary home economics, featuring the education of the prosumer (producing consumer). As a professor at the university, Uemura, *et al.* (2009, p.88) explained that the purpose of consumer education provided at the university was to help people choose safe products necessary for them and lead an eco-friendly life. She insisted that it was effective to educate specialists through acquiring expertise and practical skills . . . to cope with a variety of consumer issues arising in the

modern economic society, which became complicated.”

In addition to establishing the new department, there are some movements of consumer education in the Japan Society of Home Economics. Under the influence of consumer education in the US, some people discussed the necessity for the education of consumer citizenship as well as a theory of consumer education. However, as Azuma (2018) pointed out, the concept of the consumers’ civil society is again what was imported from European countries and the US. In other words, a different program of consumer education suitable for the Japanese mindset on the basis of its distinct cultural values has not been suggested yet.

Figure -1 shows the differences in the systems of home economics between Japan and the US.

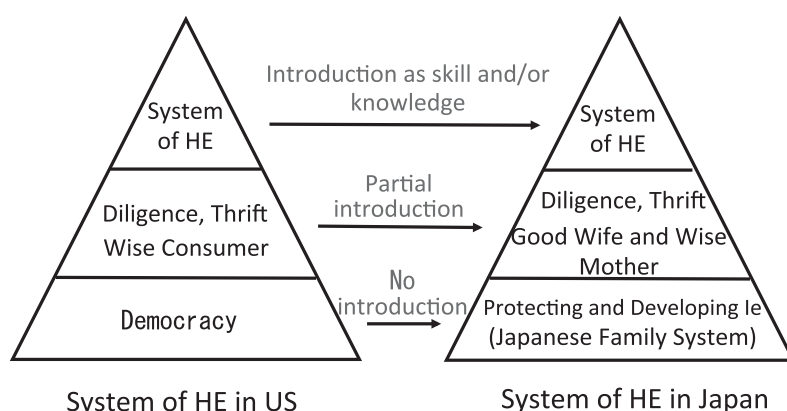


Figure-1 Difference of HE between Us and Japan

V. Directions of Ethical Consumption Education in Japan

What type of consumer education will be more effective in the future? We present the case of Tokushima (Deno and Sato, 2019) as an indicator. According to the survey on consumer awareness of ethical consumption conducted by the Consumer Affairs Agency in 2016, the recognition of “ethical consumption” was less than 10%. However, in Tokushima, where the local government has been promoting ethical consumption since 2016, the percentage of respondents who knew what is ethical consumption or knew about it increased remarkably from 26.4% in 2017 to 34.2% in 2018, according to a similar survey conducted in Tokushima by the Consumer Affairs Agency, indicating that the recognition and penetration of the word exceeded the national average.

The high degree of penetration of ethical consumption in Tokushima is due to the active initiatives by the local government. What made them work on these

initiatives? One of the major reasons was that some employees of the Consumer Affairs Agency moved to the Tokushima prefectural government office. In February 2017, the Tokushima government announced that they would invite the departments in charge of ethical consumption of the private enterprises, as the Consumer Affairs Agency opened a hub for policy research in Tokushima prefectural government office in July, 2017, with the promotion of ethical consumption being one of its key policies. The prefecture had many advanced examples of promoting education of ethical consumption, including the Josai Nishi Senior High School, which is known for its unique project of ethical consumption education. Tokushima declared that they aim at being “an advanced place of ethical consumption,” and decided to start inviting companies interested in the project from 2017. Moreover, they plan to invite the departments engaged in product planning, consumer consultation, and employee training.

Classes about ethical consumption are given in all high schools in the prefecture, with a human resources bank of the lecturers, who can effectively teach ethical consumption to students in the prefecture. They have a system for sending lecturers to classrooms in various areas for a diverse audience ranging from infants to adults. In April, 2019, Tokushima announced that “Ethical Koshien 2019” (hosted by the Prefectural Board of Education, the prefecture, and the Consumer Affairs Agency) would be held in some place in Tokushima City on December 26 and 27, where high school students from the whole country would present their approaches of ethical consumption with attention to the environment, people, and society. In the final contest in December, 12 schools would compete, namely, 8 schools from the respective eight blocks of the country selected by documents examination, two Tokushima schools, and two schools as a special category chosen by judges. The students of the schools are supposed to give presentations within ten minutes on the ethical consumption approach practiced by them.

In June, 2019, 16 company managers and university professors in Tokushima developed a framework to promote the initiative of understanding and implementing the SDGs. One of the features of the activity was the claim of not depending on the administration. Instead, residents of the prefecture play a key role in expanding the base of consumers who are interested in solving problems such as food loss, garbage, fair trade, and energy. The framework was named “Tokushima SDGs’ future conference” with Izumi Kado, a professor at the Junior College of Shikoku University who has been engaged in promoting ethical consumption, as the chairperson. About 50 people participated in the general meeting held on June 15 to approve a prospectus. “We should provide support to shape our future from Tokushima,” Professor Kado declared, pointing out that they aim at being a platform where any resident of the prefecture could participate in casually without

being limited by a company or an organization.

The trigger to establish the organization was the announcement of the basic principles by the committee on local construction of the Cabinet, that the temporary office occupied by the Consumer Affairs Agency in the Tokushima prefectural office would be enlarged to be a permanent base from 2020. Kazumi Matsushige, president of Shikoku University, addressed a general meeting, saying, “we aim at delivering our Tokushima-style initiative of SDGs to the world”.

In Tokushima, both the public and private sectors actively cooperate to realize the goal of being an advanced area of ethical consumption and SDGs. Kania and Kramer (2011) named the method “collective impact”, by which both sectors work together to solve social problems. Yamamoto and Sato (2019) identifies five requirements for the solution of social problems by collective impact as follows: (1) sharing their vision and aim, (2) sharing feedback information, (3) proactive participation of the leader of each organization, (4) finding a good coach who supports the activity, and (5) trust of the meta-backbone organization, which bundles the backbone organizations of the respective field and the nationwide recognition (the participation of residents and visit of inspection teams).

Which effect does Tokushima seek through their efforts to be an advanced place of ethical consumption and SDGs? To answer this question, the notion of “policy boosterism” provided by McCann (2013) should be considered, suggesting a policy by which Tokushima establish its position as a leading region of ethical consumption and SDGs under the guidance of the governor, improving its image and earning an economical merit. The economic effect of “policy boosterism” is not small, since, for example, the invitation of international conferences and visits of inspection teams have profound economic effects. Moreover, people may immigrate to the advanced places of SDGs or make a U-turn. Therefore, “policy boosterism” has not only an image effect, but also positive economic effects.

The attempts of the Tokushima prefecture to be an advanced place of ethical consumption have thus far succeeded. In particular, the establishment of a regional office of the Consumer Affairs Agency in Tokushima is worth repeating. In addition, Tokushima successfully hosted the G 20 international conference on consumer policy on September 5 and 6, 2019 in Tokushima-shi in cooperation with the Consumer Affairs Agency.

Moreover, “policy boosterism” includes another idea, which is the competition between cities. The competition between cities brings about positive economic effects on the advanced place at the early stage. However, as other places catch up with the first advanced place and become advanced as well, the advantage of the original advanced place is threatened. Finally, as the advantage of the advanced place becomes invalid, ethical consumption and SDGs would take root in Japan in a

true meaning, and this is what “policy boosterism” of the public good suggests.

Aeon Co., Ltd is one of the proactive companies, which participates in the ethical consumption campaign of Tokushima. On August 6, 2019, the authors interviewed Kahori Miyake, the executive officer in charge of CSR and communication, about ethical consumption in Japan. Miyake explained her own ideas and the viewpoint of the company as follows: “I think Japanese consumers tend to be distracted by the nearsighted trend and price. They seem not to prefer to think by themselves. What is important is to identify your problem, make a decision, and choose for yourself. Forget short-term gain. It is for our next generation. As we are not an education industry, it is not possible for us to teach people, and, actually, we would not intend to do so, but as a retail business, we would like to provide a place for consumers to think about their consumption behavior and to make a decision about what to choose.”

The company has been running campaigns for ethical consumption in their stores, including the yellow receipt campaign, where consumers put in a box set in the store the yellow receipts, and the company donates 1% of the total amount of the receipts gathered in the box to the local volunteer groups in the form of products. Miyake continued, “we believe that it is important to encourage our customers to act, that is, to do shopping on the yellow-receipt-day, and to put the receipt into the box. If we do everything without their knowledge, they could not be aware of the participation in the ethical consumption campaign, which would not lead to the next action of their own accord. Rather, we would like to provide opportunities for our customers to make decisions on their consumption behavior. I would like them to think deeply about what they are choosing, and not being deluged by any dubious information. If the customers think about where the vegetable came from or how they were delivered during their shopping, both the manufactures and the society would have to change. As a retailer, we make efforts to help the consumers think and act for themselves.”

What Miyake said shows a suitable positioning as a retail business, which takes part in collective impact initiatives to promote ethical consumption and SDGs to the Japanese consumers. Since ethical consumption and SDGs are global issues, it is crucial to establish a global system of collective impact initiatives to solve these problems. Finally, companies, consumers, and other organizations have to consider their own positioning and participate in collective impact initiatives to advance a shared agenda for the greater good.

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